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## **Sex on the Front: Prostitution and Venereal Disease in Russia's First World War**

**Siobhán Hearne**

On 30 December 1916, Evgeniia Trifonova made her way into the soldiers' barracks at Kreslavka disguised as a military nurse. The chief of the Russian army's counter-intelligence division identified her as an 'undocumented prostitute' from the city of Dvinsk, located around forty kilometres east of Kreslavka.<sup>1</sup> Trifonova had not only moved into a restricted military zone, but in wearing a nurse's uniform, she displaced herself from the binaries of 'loose' and 'honest' woman. As an 'undocumented prostitute', she was also working outside the Russian empire's system of tolerated prostitution. This article will examine the wider implications of Trifonova's case, namely the challenges faced by the tsarist government in its attempts to regulate the bodies of its populace during the First World War. During the conflict, the authorities grappled with the mass movement of troops and refugees, increasing levels of venereal diseases among military and civilian populations, and the heightened visibility of clandestine prostitution. These challenges destabilised the official gendering of responsibility for venereal disease transmission, and forced state officials to shift their attention away from the control of prostitutes' bodies onto the sexual lives of military personnel. This article uses responses to female heterosexual prostitution to examine how the tsarist authorities grappled to control the bodies of its populace on the Russian western front.

The tsarist authorities introduced the regulation of female prostitution in 1843 with the official aim of preventing the spread of venereal diseases.<sup>2</sup> The system never succeeded in meeting this objective, and instead, provided local authorities with a mechanism for monitoring the behaviour and movement of lower-class women. Under the system, women identified as prostitutes by the authorities had to register their

details with their local police and attend regular gynaecological examinations. These women were required to carry identification in the form of a medical ticket, which stated their personal details and attested to their sexual health. Official guidelines in pre-war St Petersburg dictated how registered prostitutes should behave, and exactly where they could live or even appear within their localities.<sup>3</sup> To avoid these restrictions and invasive examinations, many women worked outside the regulation system, so the police lists were not an exhaustive record of all women who sold sex. Inadequate examination methods, poor facilities and the authorities' reluctance to legally mandate the inspection of clients meant that regulation emphatically failed to curb venereal diseases and levels remained high in the early twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> By the 1900s, criticism of regulation began to gain momentum, as physicians, philanthropic organisations, feminists, socialists and Duma officials joined together to attack the system on medical and moral grounds. By the outbreak of the First World War, much of the educated elite were calling for the closure of all state-licensed brothels and the complete abolition of regulation.<sup>5</sup> The social turmoil of war further exacerbated the system's inherent weaknesses, and evidence of its failure to reduce levels of venereal disease became even more visible.

The subject of heterosexual prostitution during wartime has been neglected in the Russian context, but there is a wealth of valuable studies in global settings. Research has explored relationships between prostitutes and their military clients, and interrogated how state authorities sought to control both men and women's bodies through anti-venereal disease campaigns.<sup>6</sup> Other scholarship has focused more specifically on clients, and the ways in which constructions of masculinity and social class affected soldiers' experiences of prostitution.<sup>7</sup> Studies have also examined

women's entry into the business of commercial sex, and how the social dislocation and economic turmoil of wartime coincided with a rise in prostitution.<sup>8</sup> Historians of the twentieth century have explored the ways in which war granted the state additional mechanisms to both control and persecute prostitutes, and even force women to enter the sex industry.<sup>9</sup> These works provide an excellent body of literature for the study of wartime prostitution in Europe, North America and colonial Africa.

Russia's First World War has been the subject of increased interest from social historians in recent years. Studies that have focused on policies of forced migration enacted against Jews and ethnic Germans have been particularly successful in illustrating the social dislocation of the conflict for those living in the provinces that comprised the Russian western front.<sup>10</sup> Research into gender and sexuality has effectively emphasised how mass mobilisation and social dislocation resulted in the destabilisation of peacetime sexual behaviour and understandings of sexuality.<sup>11</sup> Russian language studies have focused on the military authorities' concern about the moral and sexual lives of soldiers, owing to an apparent explosion in prostitution and promiscuous sex during the war years.<sup>12</sup> Others have explored how the entry of women, such as military nurses, into the male sphere of war contributed to their association with prostitution and casual sex in the imagination of military personnel.<sup>13</sup> This article will focus specifically on official and popular responses to prostitution to illuminate how the circumstances of war had an impact upon ideas of sexuality and morality.

The geographical setting of this article is the Russian western front, particularly the provinces of Vilna, Polotsk, Grodno and Warsaw in the Pale of Settlement, as well as the Baltic provinces of Estliand and Lifliand, which are now regions of Estonia and Latvia.<sup>14</sup> This follows a recent historiographical trend that emphasises the plurality of

experiences of war and revolution outside the cities of Moscow and St Petersburg.<sup>15</sup> As with all histories of prostitution, information about women registered as prostitutes can only be accessed through the voices of the authorities and their clients. Surviving source material is often fragmented, and speaks mainly to how the authorities perceived these women and their customers, rather than the actual wartime experiences of these groups. This article draws on official and personal letters, including correspondence between central and regional branches of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (*Ministerstvo Vnutrennikh Del*, MVD); between military governors and police chiefs in various localities; and letters sent by junior officers from Russia's western front.<sup>16</sup>

### **Prostitution, expulsions and wartime migration**

Prostitution became entangled with issues of national security on Russia's western front. Even before the war, in 1910, the army and police began to collect statistics on the number and location of foreigners, especially those with connections to the German or Austrian military.<sup>17</sup> During the conflict, 'spy mania' consumed the Russian empire.<sup>18</sup> Various high-ranking officers were arrested and even executed for treason and espionage following the retreat of the Russian army after a series of substantial defeats in spring 1915.<sup>19</sup> Accusations of espionage often provided state officials with a convenient justification for Russia's failures, namely disastrous military defeats and attempts to control population movement.

Clearly influenced by 'spy mania', local authorities hurled accusations of treason at entire ethnic and religious groups.<sup>20</sup> Ethnic Germans and Jews bore the brunt of these accusations, which reflects the wider anti-Semitism of the Russian authorities during this period. In July 1914, the tsarist government issued a War Statute that granted the army absolute power over civilian authorities in localities where troops were present.

This played out most dramatically along the western front, which absorbed, and later ran through, the Pale of Settlement. From the outset of conflict, military commanders cleansed localities of the ethnic and national groups that they deemed 'unreliable', accusing Germans and Jews of espionage and ordering their forced deportation.<sup>21</sup> Military officials ordered the expulsion of the entire Jewish population of Novoaleksandriia as early as September 1914.<sup>22</sup> From early 1915, army commanders began to expel Jews more systematically. Despite great opposition from civilian authorities, in spring 1915 military commanders ordered the expulsion of Jews from Kovno and Kurliand provinces, and the Military Districts of Dvinsk and Warsaw.<sup>23</sup> Over the course of the conflict, the army deported between half a million and one million Jews and 250,000 Russian-subject Germans from areas under military rule.<sup>24</sup>

On 26 May 1915, the army's chief of staff sent out a report warning of a 'German-Jewish organisation' that apparently paid syphilitic prostitutes to lure and infect Russian officers.<sup>25</sup> The Supreme Commander emphasised the insidious nature of this threat to national security, and ordered the increased surveillance of hotels, furnished rooms and even 'suspicious private apartments'. If found, these women were to be imprisoned, deported or tried under martial law. This report was issued in order to discourage men from having sexual intercourse with prostitutes, who were apparently examined and treated less frequently during wartime. The marking of all prostitutes as potential saboteurs encouraged soldiers to treat all women who sold sex with suspicion, and the classification of the subversive organisation as 'German-Jewish' reflects a wider attack on these groups of people throughout the conflict. The presence of these prostitutes directly challenged the power of the local authorities. The women presented

an unwelcome indicator that official attempts to forcefully remove Germans and Jews from the region had been unsuccessful.

The targeting of Germans and Jews was also evident within the Warsaw Military District, home of the Russian Second Army. Here, military authorities had ordered the deportation of Germans, Jews and 'suspicious people' in December 1914.<sup>26</sup> However, on 24 June 1915, the Second Army's Department of Intelligence wrote to warn the Warsaw chief of police that there were 'still many German prostitutes who [were] likely to be involved in some form of military espionage' living in the city.<sup>27</sup> Before the war, German women accounted for just over three per cent of prostitutes across Warsaw province, and it is likely that they remained a minority in the early 1900s.<sup>28</sup> The Department of Intelligence marked two locations as potential dens of prostitute spies: the hotels 'Poloniia' and 'Narodnaia'. Here, apparently the administration and orchestra were both comprised of dubious characters, who the Department of Intelligence classified ambiguously as Austrians, Germans and Jews. He ordered that Warsaw be 'searched and cleared' of all 'suspicious elements', who were then to be deported to the remote provinces of Russia.

In response to the Department of Intelligence's request for information about prostitutes involved in 'military espionage', district police officers produced lists of foreign prostitutes living in Warsaw. As of 30 June 1915, there were seventeen German and Austrian prostitutes and seven 'German-Russian' women working in brothels across the city.<sup>29</sup> Some of these women lived in the same district, such as Germans Amiliia and Ol'ga Desh who lived at 22 Berezovaia Street and Austrians Sofiia and Vanda Struklikevich, who lived at 33 Pivnaia, both located just metres from Warsaw's Old Town market place. Other 'suspicious elements' included Austrian members of the

orchestra and waiting staff at the hotel 'Poloniia': Lehr Granz, Perkuz Goshlind and Zaidler Satednan.<sup>30</sup> Records that indicate how the Department of Intelligence used this information are unavailable, so it is impossible to know whether these people were deported. Instead, these reports reveal that certain groups of Germans and Austrians, such as prostitutes, were able to live and work this occupied military zone, over six months after the initial call for their deportation. The experiences of these prostitutes in Warsaw reveals the inability of local governments to completely enforce their own policies. In wartime Warsaw, the military authorities did not notice these foreign women initially, hence their identification as prostitutes allowed them a greater deal of residential flexibility. Wartime social dislocation thwarted state attempts to classify the population and cleanse it of any 'suspicious' elements.

Elsewhere along the Russian western front, prostitutes were at the centre of official concern surrounding security, hygiene and morality. In October 1915, the Duty General for the Commander of Armies on the Western Front wrote to the chief of Staff for the First Army, warning him of the most sinister 'method of Austro-German military intelligence': the collection of military information by both registered and clandestine prostitutes.<sup>31</sup> He explained that this had been allowed to happen because of the 'abundant prostitution' in the regions of the front, and that now the Commander recognised the need to begin registering prostitutes and checking their 'political loyalty' (*politicheskaia blagonadezhnost*). The abundance of prostitution in this region was characteristic of wartime, when both supply and demand greatly expanded. Deportations and the movement of the front line left thousands of women as refugees without any means of support, and the mass movement of soldiers to the front provided an ample customer base. Just as before the war, local authorities struggled to register all



women who were selling sex. The military authorities had control of all civil affairs in this region from the outbreak of conflict in summer 1914, but had not taken steps to ensure the official registration of all prostitutes until autumn 1915.

Some registered women took advantage of the authorities' lax attitude towards their registration in this region, especially with regards to movement. During peacetime, in the nearby Baltic province of Estland, registered prostitutes required the authorisation of the police chief and the issue of a 'passage certificate' to relocate to other towns and cities. Correspondence between the Polotsk chief of police and military command reveals that during wartime, women registered as prostitutes were able to move around without the correct identification, and even enter restricted military spaces. On 17 November 1915, Rokhamima Nanos, a registered prostitute, arrived in the town of Disna without any identity papers or permission to travel.<sup>32</sup> Her movement caught the attention of the chief of the counter-intelligence division of the First Army, who then wrote to the Polotsk police chief. Rather than punishing or forcefully expelling Nanos for her violation, the Chief instructed the local police authorities to merely ask her to return to her hometown of Polotsk.<sup>33</sup> The leniency of the authorities may have even encouraged the greater mobility of women on the police lists during this period. In November 1915, a colonel from the Gendarme Corps reported on three young refugee women renting an apartment together in Disna whom he considered suspicious. The colonel suggested that these women were working as clandestine prostitutes, and asked the local police to investigate why they had been visiting the military barracks of the First Army.<sup>34</sup> The entry of these women into restricted military spaces suggests that as in peacetime, the registration of women as prostitutes and the control of their movement was imperfect and incomplete.

Despite the authorities' laxity, the extent to which women registered as prostitutes had freedom of movement during wartime is questionable. Case studies from the Vilna province medical-police lists in November 1915 reveal the ways in which the location of conflict dictated migration. Nadezhda Skok, a peasant woman from the city of Slonim in Grodno province travelled 150 kilometres west to Belostok in January 1915, where she worked at the buffet of the restaurant 'Akvarium' for eight months, before moving 570 kilometres northeast to the city of Polotsk.<sup>35</sup> Skok left Belostok in August 1915, and her movement mirrors the withdrawal of Russian troops following the bombardment of the city and its German occupation.<sup>36</sup> Likewise, Ol'ga Nerubets moved from Belostok to Orel' for one week in August 1915 before relocating to Khar'kov for three months. In November, she made the 1000 kilometre journey to Polotsk, where she began living and working at the 'Grant-Otdel'. Nerubets' surname suggests that she was Jewish, and late nineteenth-century surveys indicate that Jews worked in the business of prostitution disproportionately to their representation in the population as a whole.<sup>37</sup> This overrepresentation was a result of anti-Semitic discrimination, which forced Jews to live in urban centres and excluded them from various professions.<sup>38</sup> Nerubets' movement away from the Pale of Settlement in August may have been in response to the anti-Semitic violence characteristic of the 'scorched earth' policy perpetrated by the Russian army during their retreat east in summer 1915.<sup>39</sup> Following the Russian army's retreat, Grodno province was occupied by the German army, which made women like Skok and Nerubets refugees displaced from their home region.

Records from the Baltic provinces support the hypothesis that some women who were registered as prostitutes by the authorities were refugees whose movement was dictated by the changing spheres of conflict. Between July and September 1915, German

forces took control of Vilna and Kurliand provinces and the city of Riga became a battleground.<sup>40</sup> The German High Sea Fleet blockaded the Gulf of Riga in August 1915, which closed Baltic ports. In the same year, five women with Germanic names from Kurland, Vilna and Lifliand provinces became inscribed onto the Arkhangelsk medical-police lists of prostitutes, a city whose prostitute population had predominantly hailed from the Arkhangelsk, Vologda and Yaroslavl' provinces between 1902 and 1909.<sup>41</sup>

In other cases, the authorities in the Baltic provinces attempted to cleanse their localities of women registered as prostitutes, perhaps with the aim of limiting the spread of venereal disease. The provinces of Estliand and Lifliand were strategically significant to the Russian empire as they were home to Baltic ports of Riga and the Port of Peter the Great in Revel' (now Tallinn). Riga, as the capital of Lifliand province, was the centre of Baltic regional government and amongst the top industrial centres across the entire empire, ranking second to St Petersburg for pre-war imports.<sup>42</sup> In 1908, the provinces of Estliand and Lifliand were some of the most economically advanced in the empire, ranking fourth and fifth out of the fifty provinces of European Russia for industrial production and for the number of industrial workers per 100 inhabitants.<sup>43</sup> Following the 1915 German invasion of the nearby Kurliand and Vilna provinces, the protection of Estliand and Lifliand became even more urgent. Local authorities required a healthy population to protect these important industrial regions. Prostitutes' association with venereal disease may have been enough to convince local authorities that they posed a threat to the security of the Baltic provinces. In winter 1915, the chief of police in Iur'ev (now Tartu) reportedly expelled all women identified as prostitutes from the city.<sup>44</sup> However, despite their removal, there were still many women working as prostitutes in Iur'ev throughout 1916, and countless women were sent to the city

hospital for venereal disease treatment.<sup>45</sup> In this city, as elsewhere on the western front, the authorities were ambitious about controlling population movement and disease, but in the context of war, their outcomes were less convincing.

In October 1915, the chief of the Armies on the Northern Front and Riga's chief of police issued an order expelling 296 women identified as prostitutes from Riga, sending them elsewhere in the Russian empire.<sup>46</sup> According to the order, all prostitutes in the city were subject to deportation, but only a quarter of the prostitute population were actually expelled.<sup>47</sup> The overwhelming majority of these expelled women hailed from the Baltic provinces and had Germanic surnames, therefore the deportations hint at more general wartime anti-German sentiments. The police chief also ordered the eviction of all brothel keepers from Riga in the same month.<sup>48</sup> In 1910, almost sixty-five per cent of brothel keepers across Lifliand province were German, so this eviction order could also represent discrimination against this group.<sup>49</sup> The chief of police predominantly evicted prostitutes to cities in the western borderlands or interior provinces of European Russia, such as Khar'kov, Ekaterinoslav and Orel'.<sup>50</sup> These regions absorbed many refugees fleeing conflict on the western front. By May 1916, seven per cent of Ekaterinoslav's population and 3.3 per cent of Khar'kov's population was made up of refugees.<sup>51</sup> Forced from their homes, these women joined the growing number of the empire's refugees, which reached at least 3.3 million people by the end of 1915.<sup>52</sup>

Wider society made explicit links between female refugees and prostitution. Organisations offering aid for displaced persons emphasised the naivety and desperation of refugee women, two qualities that made them vulnerable to procurement for prostitution by 'mercenary or lustful individuals' on their travel to the

Russian interior.<sup>53</sup> Other public voices vilified female refugees as deviant women, whose apparent lewd behaviour and overt sexuality disrupted the social harmony of their new destinations. One journalist writing for the Arkhangel'sk newspaper *Northern Morning* (*Severnoe Utro*) asserted that prostitution had become more widespread since the 'influx of refugees'.<sup>54</sup> Comparing the major city thoroughfare Trotskii Prospekt to Nevskii Prospekt in Petrograd, he reported that prostitutes 'molested' young people and caused public disturbances. Other Arkhangel'sk reporters blamed refugees for an apparent rise in levels of venereal disease across the city.<sup>55</sup> The extent of this 'influx' is difficult to determine, but it is evident that anti-refugee discourse in the Arkhangel'sk popular press focused on the arrival of people specifically from the Baltic provinces. One journalist purported that although only fifty refugees were registered in Arkhangelsk, in reality there were 1000 Latvians.<sup>56</sup> Another journalist reported that the number of Latvians was at least 2000.<sup>57</sup> These articles demonstrate the correlation between Baltic refugees and prostitution in the imagination of the popular press.

### **Military clients**

Venereal disease was widespread within the Russian armed forces, with 177,155 cases reported in the two years following August 1914.<sup>58</sup> Throughout the conflict, streams of wounded soldiers meant that hospitals were overcrowded, as around 5.2 million men were hospitalised for an average of three to four weeks each.<sup>59</sup> This accumulation of wounded soldiers further stretched the medical facilities for the treatment of prostitutes and their clients, which countless public health experts and state officials had already described as completely inadequate before the war.<sup>60</sup> Physicians who had previously carried out the inspection of prostitutes were drafted into the war effort. In June 1916, the Health Department of the Naval Fortress in Revel' complained that due to

‘wartime conditions’ just one doctor was now responsible for treating 400 prostitutes and 150 of their clients for venereal disease each month.<sup>61</sup> Staff shortages and soaring rates of infection meant that military authorities and medical personnel shifted their attention onto the regulation of clients rather than prostitutes. Men in the armed services were more static and easier to establish control over than refugees and unregistered prostitutes. This shift of focus onto men’s bodies occurred in belligerent nations across Europe, and was a key part of ‘regulating society for the purposes of military strength’ during wartime.<sup>62</sup>

Before the war, certain local authorities attempted to inspect the bodies of lower-class men under the banner of venereal disease control. In 1903 in Khar’kov province, the district factory inspector obliged factory owners to examine the genitalia of all potential industrial workers before they began their employment.<sup>63</sup> In 1909, the Navy’s Health Department recommended the weekly corporeal examination of all lower-ranking sailors, although it is unclear whether this actually happened in practice.<sup>64</sup> In pre-war Moscow and St Petersburg, certain employers held on to their workers’ passports after the end of their employment until they could prove that they were free of syphilis.<sup>65</sup> Unlike prostitutes, the inspection of male clients was never legally mandated. Faced with depleted staff, strained medical facilities and rising venereal disease levels, medical authorities in wartime adopted a stricter approach towards military personnel who visited prostitutes. Before the war, they had been relatively anonymous, but after the outbreak of conflict, they became vilified as deliberate shirkers.

Due to overcrowding in the Kronshtadt Nikolai Naval Hospital, sailors infected with venereal diseases were transferred to a hospital at the port of Helsinki in early

1915.<sup>66</sup> Medical personnel in Helsinki expressed their disgust at the Kronshtadt patients, evidently irritated that their hospital facilities were being stretched further even in light of chronic bed shortages. Aleksandr Semenov, a junior doctor in Helsinki, reported on one Kronshtadt sailor:

He behaved in such a way to sabotage his treatment so he could stay longer at the hospital. He made up all kinds of illnesses, and Dr Kochetky called him a fake (*simulant*) in his report. There is no doubt that such a person will try to become infected again or artificially cause irritation to his [urethral] canal so he can return to the hospital. He was covered in tattoos with indecent content, which characterised him to some extent. When he was discharged from the hospital, he said “all the same, I will come again soon”. I told him that him that he should not dare to come, even in the event of illness, and I have not seen him since.<sup>67</sup>

Dr. Semenov's vilification of this Kronshtadt sailor demonstrates a sharp contrast from official perceptions of responsibility for venereal disease as dictated by regulation policy. Regulation mandated the inspection of prostitutes rather than clients, which meant that responsibility for venereal disease was explicitly gendered. Prostitutes were required to register their details with their local police, whereas ordinary urban clients received a certain level of anonymity. During wartime, through increased mobility, contact between medical staff and prostitutes became less frequent. The turmoil of conflict meant that more and more women working as prostitutes continued to slip under the radar of local authorities, who were preoccupied with the mass movement of

troops and refugees to their localities. These circumstances meant that medical personnel and military authorities shifted their focus away from monitoring prostitutes' sexual health onto regulating the sex lives of military clients. The control of these men was even more urgent, as the health of soldiers and sailors impacted upon their fighting ability. Men who faked their illnesses deliberately endangered national security during a period when their full force was required.<sup>68</sup> This vilification of male bodies was not unique to Russia, as Joanna Bourke observes in her work on Britain during the First World War, men's bodies became 'blameworthy' as wartime propaganda continued to produce images of shirking or malingering soldiers who deliberately became injured or infected in order to avoid service.<sup>69</sup>

The shift of attention onto military clients is evident in a report sent by a group of physicians to the Health Inspector of Revel' Port in November 1914. To control levels of apparently epidemic venereal disease, the doctors recommended the compulsory examination of all new recruits on arrival as well as cooks, bakers and messengers working in the port.<sup>70</sup> All sailors were required to collect a so-called 'means of contraception' (*profilakticheskoe sredstvo*) before going on leave, and if they had sexual intercourse while away, they were obliged to visit the hospital for further prophylactic treatment on their return. The Revel' authorities were eager to regulate military personnel's sexual lives in order to control disease, and infected sailors were required to provide exact information about the source of their infection to the Health Department of the Port. For example, on 4 November 1915 the sailor Peter Falomev, reported that he caught his infection at the brothel 'Venice' in Revel' from a woman named Ellie working in room seven. Grigori Spirin named Polunina in room twelve of the brothel 'Manchuria' as the source of his infection.<sup>71</sup> Although doctors still presumed



prostitutes to be the source, sailors now had a national obligation to protect their own sexual health and readily share information about their sexual encounters.

The medical authorities at Revel' Port struggled to implement their ambitious attempts at corporeal regulation. Frustrated as levels of venereal disease continued to rise, at their May 1916 meeting the Revel' medical-police committee blamed sailors for spreading venereal diseases. They correlated an apparent increase in alcohol abuse with a rise in infection, something which they claimed was the fault of sailors. According to the committee, more and more prostitutes were attending their medical examinations in a hungover state (*sostoianii pokhmel'ia*).<sup>72</sup> Prostitutes apparently informed the committee that their sailor clients brought their own alcohol to these establishments, as the sale of hard spirits was illegal in brothels. When they failed to impose control over the bodies of sailors, the committee presented military personnel as deliberately subversive, no longer anonymous and blameless clients.

The medical-police committee also accused sailors of lying to medical personnel about the source of their infection. When asked, sailors allegedly always answered that they had caught their disease at the brothels 'Venice' or 'Manchuria', two establishments frequented almost exclusively by the lower ranks of the navy.<sup>73</sup> The committee believed that the sailors deliberately lied about their disease, as they were afraid of telling their military superiors that they had visited 'secret dens' and the private apartments of unregistered prostitutes.<sup>74</sup> This condemnation indicates that, to a certain extent, military and medical authorities were willing to tolerate the sexual behaviour of military personnel during wartime so long as it fell within the legal boundaries of state regulation. Before the war, many Russian military physicians, like their European counterparts, promoted abstinence and long-term monogamous relationships for the

lower ranks of the military as the most effective means for preventing the spread of venereal infection.<sup>75</sup> Despite this, official discourse also acknowledged that the lifestyles of soldiers and sailors often prevented them from living up to this ideal, so regulation provided a safety net that theoretically allowed military personnel to engage in casual sex with women vetted and monitored by law enforcement agencies. The practices outlined in regulation policy, such as the regular examination of female bodies to protect public health, reinforced the idea that male sexual gratification was necessary. The turmoil of wartime meant that the ideals of sexual continence and monogamy for military personnel were even more difficult to achieve. In light of this, official discourse appeared more tolerant of casual sex within the confines of regulation policy.

Men in the military who contracted venereal diseases received little sympathy from the authorities. The Chief Naval Medical Unit in Petrograd issued a circular in November 1915 recommending that diseased sailors no longer needed the 'forced idleness' of restful treatment, and should instead participate in manual labour for the war effort.<sup>76</sup> Military personnel were even accused of deliberately seeking out infection by their contemporaries. One Soviet memoirist accused his fellow soldiers of selfishly 'organising orgies' with diseased prostitutes with the aim of being removed from active service.<sup>77</sup> Although evidence for this is limited, historian Aleksandr Astashov argues that excerpts from letters and memoirs reveal that soldiers were, at the very least, indifferent to contracting diseases. One officer from the 33<sup>rd</sup> Army Corps bragged in a personal letter: 'I cannot stop whoring; I just try to keep going regardless of venereal diseases'.<sup>78</sup> On the other hand, the vilification of military personnel as deliberate transgressors could also reflect wider frustrations on the part of military authorities, who were unable to control the sexual activities of their men despite attempts at

regulation. The Russian army's retreat westwards in summer 1915 saw huge losses of human life and territory, and the subversive diseased sailor or soldier may have provided civilian authorities with a welcome scapegoat.

### **Experiences of prostitution at the front**

Letters sent from the front provide insight into how men experienced prostitution during wartime, as either clients or observers. In their letters, military personnel reveal their assumptions about appropriate female behaviour, as many bemoaned the 'moral decline' and abundant prostitution that they witnessed at the front. It is highly likely that more women engaged in prostitution during the First World War than in peacetime. The conflict drew thousands of women onto the front line of battle, outside of the supervision of their husbands and fathers. Additionally, the social dislocation caused by the shifting front line and official expulsions of 'undesirable' social and ethnic groups left thousands of women destitute. The logistics of coordinating battle strategy and managing the influx of refugees meant that the authorities' attempts to police prostitution continued to be ineffective during wartime. These factors make it difficult to locate the women who worked as prostitutes in source material, as the majority most likely worked outside official regulation as casual or clandestine prostitutes. Instead, we are left with men's impressions of the increase in casual prostitution they apparently witnessed at the front.

This section explores letters predominantly penned by junior officers (*praporshchiki*) and it is important to remember that the social backgrounds of these men coloured their perceptions. Therefore, their remarks are not necessarily representative of the vast majority of men at the front, who were in fact married peasant men recruited as low-ranking soldiers.<sup>79</sup> Coming from the junior officer class,

the majority of letter writers would have been more receptive to middle-class notions of morality, which typically categorised respectable educated women as 'morally irreproachable', confined to the roles of housekeeper and mother.<sup>80</sup> Lower-class recruits would have been more familiar with working women, particularly after a rise in the number of women migrating to urban centres for wage labour in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>81</sup> In the countryside, farmwomen spent almost many hours doing agricultural labour as men and pregnancy did not exempt them from work.<sup>82</sup> That being said, patriarchal customs permeated village life, so recruits may have had similar ideas about acceptable female morality and sexuality. Peasant men's 'sexual domination of women' was reinforced through ritualised displays of masculinity, such as the playing of obscene games at communal evening gatherings and the collective policing of female sexual behaviour by young men.<sup>83</sup> Village communities monitored women's sexual behaviour far more strictly than men's and women who engaged in sexual intercourse outside of marriage risked public defamation.<sup>84</sup>

An increase in the visibility of prostitution during wartime provided some military personnel with evidence of a complete breakdown of morals and challenged their traditional ideals of female behaviour. Women who were identified as patriotic figures of purity in public discourse, such as the military nurse, became associated with promiscuity and commercial sex in non-official sources.<sup>85</sup> Nurses were referred to as sisters of mercy (*sestry miloserdiia*) or sisters by soldiers and officers alike. One junior officer emphasised the overt sexuality of these women. He wrote euphemistically that they were "'merciful" in the truest sense', and that he had 'felt them up and kissed them so warmly [to] know that they are willing'.<sup>86</sup> As Russian nursing was a philanthropic activity closely connected with religion, rather than a professionalised occupation,

sisters of mercy were expected to adhere to strict behavioural guidelines.<sup>87</sup> It was the wartime blurring of the binary between the 'virtuous nurse' and the 'debauched prostitute' which appeared to be most troubling for young officers. Men lower down the military ranks also expressed their distaste for the distortion of these boundaries. A refugee working on the construction of military bridges across the Western Dvina River described prostitutes who disguised themselves as nurses as the 'enemy within'.<sup>88</sup> Another letter lamented that the 'path of mercy' that led women to the nursing profession had now 'become so slippery that good women lose their footing'.<sup>89</sup>

There are cases of prostitutes disguising themselves as military nurses and Red Cross workers in order to solicit clients.<sup>90</sup> However, concern surrounding the connections between nursing and prostitution reveals wider anxieties about women's appropriate place in society. Laurie Stoff argues that both before and during the First World War, Russian women were still expected to adhere to notions of 'sexual purity, submission to male authority and selfless service', and when unable to adhere to this model, open to being attacked as immoral and overtly sexual.<sup>91</sup> Negative sexualised discourse and imagery on nursing was a 'sharp rebuke' against those who moved outside of appropriate feminine behaviour. What appears to have concerned junior officers most in these letters most was the fact that the wartime mass mobilisation of women into the nursing profession and onto the front further blurred the boundaries between 'honest women' and prostitutes.

The complications of these blurred lines were echoed in discourse of the educated elite, which extended the criticism of female morality outside the field of nursing. In 1916, Professor Vladimir Ivanov, Head of the Department for Skin and Venereal Diseases at the Psychoneurological Institute in Petrograd, published a short

book intended for popular readership entitled *War, Public Health and Venereal Diseases*. Ivanov connected the 'huge increase' in prostitution with female financial independence, which he regarded as morally damaging for women. He asked the reader to ponder how exactly women afforded the 'stunning outfits' (*umopomrachel'nykh nariadov*) that they now wore to the cinema and theatre.<sup>92</sup> Like other late imperial physicians, he linked female lower-class labour with promiscuity and prostitution, likening the factory itself to the 'altar of Venus, who has claimed many victims'.<sup>93</sup> The number of women in the industrial workforce rose significantly during the war, as their representation jumped from 26.6 per cent in 1914 to 43.4 per cent by 1917.<sup>94</sup> In wartime, the heightened visibility of women in industry evidently troubled educated commentators like Ivanov, who in his conclusion, branded all women, including married women, as potential 'secret' prostitutes who 'very cleverly disguise their true profession'.<sup>95</sup>

Educated commentators used their observations of increased prostitution as evidence of an apparent decline in female morality.<sup>96</sup> The final paragraph in Ivanov's book on venereal disease in wartime included a warning directed exclusively at women that echoed middle-class ideals of female morality. Ivanov stressed that soldiers and officers had a 'patriotic duty' to protect themselves from venereal infection.<sup>97</sup> Female responsibility was different, as women apparently had a moral duty to protect their husbands, rather than their country. Ivanov warned all Russian women and girls:

Be careful! Take care of your health so that you have the right to boldly look into the eyes of your husband or future groom, who, whether wounded, or victorious and healthy, will return from the march to heart and home!<sup>98</sup>

In their correspondence, officers used women's behaviour as a way to reinforce stereotypes about ethnicity, nationality and the supposed immorality of lower-class people. 'Women who live in damned Lithuania do not have consciences', wrote one officer, 'one disgraceful mother recommended her daughter to a soldier. In this depravity, they have forgotten God.'<sup>99</sup> One officer from the Fourth Army wrote that in Poland, almost all women and girls smoked and that morality was nowhere to be found.<sup>100</sup> Others lamented a more general loss of women's morals in wartime. 'Women have become very spoiled', bemoaned one soldier, 'a terrible time has come. People have forgotten God and lost their consciences'.<sup>101</sup> These remarks about women could also echo discourse from various rescue organisations, lawyers and physicians, which stereotyped female refugees as morally lax and easily led towards 'debauchery'.<sup>102</sup> Their voices joined with other members of educated society, whose had begun voicing their concerns about appropriate female morality long before the outbreak of conflict.

Tales of the debauched lives of the upper echelons of the military also feature in the junior officers' letters. A junior officer from the Riazan infantry regiment reported to a friend that eight higher-ranking officers had been evacuated as they were infected with chancroid, a form of venereal disease.<sup>103</sup> In another letter, another junior officer from Bessarabia province described the excesses of high-ranking officers' sexual rituals. He described a so-called 'antique evening' (*antichnyi vechera*):

I did not want to go. It was disgusting. They sent for me and made me go by force. Ten people sat around the table, all of them officers. The table was laden with all kinds of wines (and by the way, as much wine as you want). Suddenly somebody behind me covered my face with their hands. I

turned quickly, and there were five naked prostitutes from Lipkan [Lipcani in Moldova]. You cannot imagine how depressed I was.<sup>104</sup>

In a similar vein, one man who signed himself off as a 'true patriot and warrior' wrote a letter to Adjutant-General Aleksei Brusilov detailing the ways in which officers flouted regulations in Riga. He asserted that even though it was forbidden for officers to travel around the city in the company of women, even with sisters of mercy, he actually witnessed them 'riding around with known public women on their arms'.<sup>105</sup> This behaviour apparently had an 'extremely destructive' impact on the lower ranks. He also described an apparent everyday ritual of officers, where they picked up women from the city and brought them back to the front for between two and six hours. Officers returned to service 'drowsy and lethargic from all of the debauchery', he recalled, which made the Germans extremely happy as their fighting power was depleted.<sup>106</sup>

The issue of sex and relationships was a point of contention between junior officers and those higher up the military ranks. One junior officer writing in Kiev described an incident in which officers made it clear that they believed that they had the exclusive right to the bodies of sexually available women. He wrote:

Yesterday there was a ball, there were a few sisters there of course, and the officers were drinking...They waltzed, sang, shouted and made a din. The sisters left the ball with members of the battalion and the officers were offended. They started shooting from their revolvers, like they were going on an offensive.<sup>107</sup>



These junior officers' remarks illuminated the negative ways in which they believed their commanders' sexual behaviour impacted upon national security, which inverted the authorities' concern surrounding the sexual lives of the lower ranks. Even before the war, medical-police committees and government officials frequently stereotyped lower-class men, particularly in the navy and military, as ignorant and lacking in self-control. These alleged qualities made them especially vulnerable to contracting venereal disease which justified their greater control and surveillance. Excerpts from public lectures held in pre-war Libava aimed at the lower ranks exemplify this. Talks were full of imperatives: 'do not drink!'; 'always keep your genitals clean'; 'do not go to public women: it is unscrupulous and immoral!' (*bessovestno i beznravstvenno*).<sup>108</sup> This message was reinforced by medical authorities at the port of Libava, who continuously pushed for compulsory and frequent corporal inspections of the lower ranks. In contrast, the junior officers' letters challenge this stereotype and emphasise the lack of self-control and concern for public order of the upper echelons of the Russian military.

## **Conclusion**

Prostitution and venereal disease in wartime Russia were important issues for central, provincial, medical and military authorities. At the heart of official discourse during the First World War was the perception that the movement of masses of the population contributed to social disorder and a rise in prostitution and venereal disease. Mass mobilisation brought thousands of young men to Russia's western borderlands, where both the authorities and military personnel reported flagrant prostitution and an abundance of venereal disease. Experiences of industrialisation and urbanisation in the late nineteenth century had already ignited official concern about how population

movement allegedly threw morality and order into disarray, and wartime circumstances further exacerbated this.

The problem of the increased visibility of prostitution is a theme that runs throughout official correspondence. The social dislocation of the conflict increased, at the very least, the visibility of clandestine prostitutes, which contributed to a conception of a 'moral decline' voiced in the letters of junior officers. War also exposed the failures of regulation, as local authorities were confronted with rising levels of venereal disease, yet lacked the proper resources to solve this problem. During this period of conflict, the authorities' focus shifted more overtly onto the sexual behaviour and habits of men. Prostitutes' clients in the military and navy were vilified as fraudulent and deliberate subversive by local medical-police and physicians alike. Arguably, this shift represented frustration at rising levels of disease and ineffective policing methods for prostitution.

Regulation was widely criticised in medical, legal and philanthropic discourse from the late nineteenth century, but the circumstances of the First World War further illuminated the system's inadequacy and failure to achieve its objectives. The regulation of prostitution was abolished while Russia was still at war on 19 July 1917. Following the February revolution and the fall of the autocracy, the Central Sanitary Commission for the Struggle with Venereal Diseases under the authority of the Provisional Government recommended the closure of all state-licensed brothels and the cessation of registering women as prostitutes.<sup>109</sup> Members of the Commission asserted that a serious effort to combat venereal diseases was now required, as levels continued to rise following the turmoil of war and revolution. The authorities' focus shifted onto improving the sexual health of men and women through widespread public treatment.

This method paved the way for the Bolsheviks, who later adopted this approach in an attempt to treat prostitution and venereal disease as matters of social hygiene.

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<sup>1</sup> Kreslavka is now Krāslava, and Dvinsk is now Daugavpils. Both are located in southern Latvia. Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Voenno-Istoricheskii Arkhiv (RGVIA), f. 2106, op. 8, d. 387, l. 11.

<sup>2</sup> For a study of imperial regulation see Bernstein, *Sonia's Daughters*.

<sup>3</sup> Tsentralnyi Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv Sankt-Peterburga (TsGIA SPb), f. 595, op. 1, d. 568, l. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Figures vary from source to source. Professor Ivanov, a venereologist, estimated that there were 4,263,742 registered cases of syphilis across European Russia between 1902 and 1907 (70.5 cases per 10,000 people). The number of unregistered cases may have been higher. Ivanov, *Voina*, 8. A survey published in the *Russian Journal of Skin and Venereal Diseases* claimed that syphilis accounted for ten per cent of all registered diseases across the Russian empire in 1911, beaten only by influenza (twenty-one per cent) and malaria (nineteen per cent). 'Otchet o sostoianii narodnogo zdравиia i organizatsiia vrachebno pomoshchi v Rossii za 1911 god', *Russkii Zhurnal Kozhnikh i Venericheskikh Boleznei*, 11-12 (1913), 412. A 1914 survey stated that every tenth person in the Baltic port of Revel' was infected with venereal disease. The survey also claimed that over six per cent of all St Petersburg inhabitants and almost five per cent of all Moscow residents were infected. I. I. Truzhemeskii, 'Nekotorye Dannye o Rasprostraneni Venericheskikh Boleznei v Revele', *Russkii Zhurnal Kozhnikh i Venericheskikh Boleznei*, 4 (1914), 395-96.

<sup>5</sup> In October 1913, the St Petersburg Club of the Women's Progressive Party, under the leadership of Dr Mariia Pokrovskaiia, submitted a bill to the State Duma drafted by Professor Arkadii Elistratov entitled 'on the abolition of the medical-police supervision of prostitution and the closure of brothels'. The bill attacked regulation on morals grounds and branded brothels as 'hotbeds of syphilis'. Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv (RGIA) f. 1075, op. 2, d. 41, l. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Bland and Mort, 'Look Out for the Good Time Girl'; Harrison, 'The British Army'; Taithe, *Defeated Flesh*; Timm, 'Sex With a Purpose'; Wingfield, 'The Enemy Within'.

<sup>7</sup> See chapter six in Levine, *Prostitution, Race and Politics*; Makepeace, 'Male Heterosexuality'.

<sup>8</sup> Bernstein, *Sonia's Daughters*, 42-44; Clinton, *Public Women*.

<sup>9</sup> Harris, *Selling Sex in the Reich*; Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*; Lie, 'The State as Pimp'.

<sup>10</sup> Gatrell, *Whole Empire Walking*; Prusin, 'The Russian Military and the Jews in Galicia'; Lohr, *Nationalising the Russian Empire*; Sanborn, *Imperial Apocalypse*; Sanborn, 'Unsettling the Empire'.

<sup>11</sup> Healey, 'Love and Death', 153-162.

<sup>12</sup> Astashov, 'Seksual'nyi Opyt Russkogo Soldata'; Seniavskaiia, 'Bez Baby i Bez Vina i Voina ne Nuzhna'.

<sup>13</sup> Stoff, *Russia's Sisters of Mercy*, 266-294; Healey, 'Love and Death', 155.

<sup>14</sup> This region was known as the eastern front by Western European Allies and the northwestern front by the Central Powers.

<sup>15</sup> See the collection edited by Retish, Novikova and Badcock, *Russia's Home Front in War and Revolution, 1914-1922, Book 1*.

<sup>16</sup> Astashov's and Simmons' edited collection contains 1600 letters found in the *fondi* of RGVIA. Astashov and Simmons, *Pis'ma s Voyny*.

<sup>17</sup> Lohr argues that this desire for information was prompted by the counter-intelligence disasters of the Russo-Japanese war. Lohr, *Nationalising the Russian Empire*, 18.

<sup>18</sup> For a comprehensive discussion of 'spy mania' see Fuller, *The Foe Within*.

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- <sup>19</sup> These included Lieutenant Colonel Sergei A. Miasoedov who was executed in spring 1915 and Vladimir Sukhomlinov (Minister of War 1909-1915), who was accused of treason in March 1916. According to Fuller, these men were vilified across all section of Russian society, and their names 'became synonyms for traitor', see Fuller, *The Foe Within*, 8.
- <sup>20</sup> Lohr, *Nationalising the Russian Empire*, 19.
- <sup>21</sup> Sanborn, 'Unsettling the Empire', 306.
- <sup>22</sup> Novoaleksandriia is now Pulawy in Poland. Gatrell, *Whole Empire Walking*, 17-18.
- <sup>23</sup> Lohr, 'The Russian Army', 410-11.
- <sup>24</sup> Lohr, 'The Russian Army', 404; 406.
- <sup>25</sup> RGIA, f. 1298, op. 1, d. 2400, l. 194.
- <sup>26</sup> The Second Army issued a directive on 27 December 1914 which ordered the deportation of all German men over the age of 15 to areas 'beyond the Vistula river', which runs through Warsaw. One month later, the same army ordered that this be extended to 'all Jews and suspicious people'. Sanborn, 'Unsettling the Empire', 307.
- <sup>27</sup> Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskii Federatsii (GARF), f. 220, op. 1, d. 1645, l. 1.
- <sup>28</sup> An 1889 empire-wide survey edited by A. Dubrovskii also indicated that eighteen per cent of registered prostitutes in Warsaw province were Jewish. Polish women accounted for seventy-five per cent of all registered prostitutes across the province. Dubrovskii, *Prostitutsiia*, 26-30.
- <sup>29</sup> GARF, f. 220, op. 1, d. 1645, l. 32-33.
- <sup>30</sup> GARF, f. 220, op. 1, d. 1645, l. 5.
- <sup>31</sup> RGVIA, f. 2106, op. 8, d. 217, l. 9.
- <sup>32</sup> RGVIA, f. 2106, op. 8, d. 217, l. 24. Disna is now Dzisna in Belarus.
- <sup>33</sup> RGVIA, f. 2106, op. 8, d. 217, l. 24.
- <sup>34</sup> RGVIA, f. 2106, op. 8, d. 261, l. 9.
- <sup>35</sup> RGVIA, f. 2106, op. 8, d. 217, ll. 15-17. The territory of Grodno province now comprises mainly Belarus, but also smaller parts of Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine. The cities of Slonim and Polotsk are now located in Belarus. Belostok is now the city of Białystok in north-eastern Poland.
- <sup>36</sup> Vejas, *War Land on the Eastern Front*, 60.
- <sup>37</sup> Bernstein, *Sonia's Daughters*, 164.
- <sup>38</sup> Avrutin, *Jews and the Imperial State*, 95-96.
- <sup>39</sup> Sanborn, 'Unsettling the Empire', 309-310.
- <sup>40</sup> Parrott, 'The Baltic States from 1914 to 1923', 136.
- <sup>41</sup> Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Arkhangel'skoi Oblasti (GAAO), f. 37, op. 1t2, d. 4163, l. 6, 45, 197, 207, 238.
- <sup>42</sup> Henriksson, 'Riga: Growth, Conflict and the Limitations of Good Government', 179-180; Hamm, 'Riga's 1913 City Election', 442.
- <sup>43</sup> Raun, 'The Estonians', 290.
- <sup>44</sup> Rahvusarhiiv (EAA), 242.1.800, l. 46.
- <sup>45</sup> EAA 330.1.2395. This file includes countless referrals written by the Iur'ev medical-police committee that sent women with venereal diseases to Iur'ev city hospital for treatment throughout 1916. The involvement of the committee in this matter suggests that these women were working as prostitutes.
- <sup>46</sup> GAAO, f. 37, op. 1t2, d. 4163, l. 243-252.
- <sup>47</sup> Latvijas Valsts Vēstures Arhīvs (LVVA) f. 51, op. 1, d. 23555, l. 159. Riga's prostitute population was 1207 in 1914 according to the records of the city's medical-police committee. LVVA, f. 51, op. 1, d. 23557, l. 394.
- <sup>48</sup> LVVA, f. 51, op. 1, d. 273, l. 85.
- <sup>49</sup> Dubrovskii, *Prostitutsiia*, 14.
- <sup>50</sup> Eight-five women were sent to Khar'kov, thirty to Ekaterinoslav and thirty to Orel'. Ekaterinoslav is now Dnipro in Ukraine.
- <sup>51</sup> Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking*, 54-55.
- <sup>52</sup> Gatrell, *Russia's First World War*, 77.
- <sup>53</sup> Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking*, 120-121.
- <sup>54</sup> 'Pogovorili i Zabyli', *Severnoe Utro*, 12 December 1915, 3.
- <sup>55</sup> 'Venericheskie Zabolevaniia', *Arkhangel'sk*, 26 June 1915, 3.
- <sup>56</sup> 'Bezhtensy v Arkhangel'ske', *Severnoe Utro*, 19 August 1915, 1-2.
- <sup>57</sup> 'Den' za Dnem', *Arkhangel'sk*, 18 December 1915, 3.
- <sup>58</sup> Sanborn, *Imperial Apocalypse*, 162.
- <sup>59</sup> Gatrell, *Russia's First World War*, 65.

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- <sup>60</sup> Bernstein, *Sonia's Daughters*, 60-61.
- <sup>61</sup> Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Voenno-Morskogo Flota (RGAVMF) f. 949, op. 3, d. 4, l. 35. The fortress was known as the Port of Peter the Great.
- <sup>62</sup> Wingfield, 'The Enemy Within', 571-572.
- <sup>63</sup> Tsentral'nyi Derzhavnyi Istorichnyi Arkhiv Ukrainy m. Kyiv (TsDIAK) f. 2090, op. 1, d. 96, l. 26.
- <sup>64</sup> RGAVMF, f. 408, op. 1, d. 2236, l. 53.
- <sup>65</sup> A. Mazanik, 'Sanitation, Urban Environment', 89.
- <sup>66</sup> RGAVMF, f. 408, op. 1, d. 2510, l. 1.
- <sup>67</sup> RGAVMF, f. 408, op. 1, d. 2510, l. 8.
- <sup>68</sup> Nancy M. Wingfield discusses rumours of soldiers 'shirking' by deliberately contracting venereal disease in wartime Austria, see Wingfield, 'The Enemy Within', 577.
- <sup>69</sup> Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, pp. 81-83.
- <sup>70</sup> RGAVMF, f. 949, op. 3, d. 4, l. 2.
- <sup>71</sup> RGAVMF, f. 408, op. 1, d. 2510, l. 29.
- <sup>72</sup> RGAVMF, f. 949, op. 3, d. 4, l. 37.
- <sup>73</sup> RGAVMF, f. 949, op. 3, d. 4, l. 37.
- <sup>74</sup> RGAVMF, f. 949, op. 3, d. 4, l. 38.
- <sup>75</sup> For example, lectures delivered in the Baltic port of Libava in the early 1910s promoted sexual continence as an ideal for sailors, RGAVMF, f. 408, op. 1, d. 1658, l. 117b, 114. Likewise in pre-war Britain, the promotion of continence, sexual self-control and a more tolerant attitude to the marriage of military personnel emerged in military literature, apparently in the hope that 'marriage would discourage more casual liaisons'. Harrison, 'The British Army and Venereal Disease', p. 137.
- <sup>76</sup> RGAVMF, f. 408, op. 1, d. 2877, l. 1.
- <sup>77</sup> Petrone, *The Great War in Russian Memory*, 108.
- <sup>78</sup> Cited in Astashov, 'Seksual'nyi Opyt', 373.
- <sup>79</sup> In 1914, between eighty and ninety per cent of recruited soldiers were peasants and seventy per cent were married. Astashov, 'Seksual'nyi Opyt', 368.
- <sup>80</sup> Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness*, 186.
- <sup>81</sup> For a comprehensive study of female industrial workers see Glickman, *Russian Factory Women: Workplace and Society, 1880-1914*.
- <sup>82</sup> Ransel, 'Infant-Care Cultures in the Russian Empire', 116.
- <sup>83</sup> Young men targeted young girls who had illegitimate children. Practices included the defacing of her parents' property or public defamation of character through the loud singing of mocking songs and rhymes. Worobec, 'Masculinity', 83-84.
- <sup>84</sup> Alpern Engel, *Between the Fields and the City*, 8-9.
- <sup>85</sup> Stoff, *Russia's Sisters of Mercy*, 266-267.
- <sup>86</sup> Letter 1224, 9 January 1916, *Pis'ma*, 582.
- <sup>87</sup> Stoff, *Russia's Sisters of Mercy*, 285.
- <sup>88</sup> Letter 1321, 1 October 1916, *Pis'ma*, 619.
- <sup>89</sup> Letter 1338, 15 November 1916, *Pis'ma*, 626.
- <sup>90</sup> RGVA, f. 2106, op. 8, d. 387, l. 11. See also Stoff, *Russia's Sisters of Mercy*, 282-284.
- <sup>91</sup> Stoff, *Russia's Sisters of Mercy*, 292.
- <sup>92</sup> Ivanov, *Voina*, 17.
- <sup>93</sup> Ivanov, *Voina*, 17. For a discussion of elite attitudes to lower-class sexuality, see Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness*, 191.
- <sup>94</sup> McDermid and Hillyar, *Women and Work in Russia*, 144.
- <sup>95</sup> Ivanov, *Voina*, 17.
- <sup>96</sup> In a comparative context, Lisa Todd explores the perceived moral breakdown in Germany during the First World War. She argues that 'discourses of fear' during the conflict were centred around the consequences of female promiscuity. See Todd, '"The Soldier's Wife Who Ran Away with the Russian"', 257-278.
- <sup>97</sup> Ivanov, *Voina*, 18.
- <sup>98</sup> Ivanov, *Voina*, 20.
- <sup>99</sup> The quotation reads 'odno bezobrazie mat' rekomenduet svoiu doch' soldatu' and there are clear sexual connotations. Letter 1296 23 July 1916, *Pis'ma*, 608.
- <sup>100</sup> Letter 1219, 26 December 1915, *Pis'ma*, 580.
- <sup>101</sup> Letter 1347, 10 December 1916, *Pis'ma*, 629.
- <sup>102</sup> Gatrell, *Whole Empire Walking*, 120-121.



<sup>103</sup> Letter 1243, 10 March 1916, *Pis'ma*, 587.

<sup>104</sup> Letter 1257, 10 April 1916, *Pis'ma*, 593.

<sup>105</sup> Letter 1255, 4 April 1916, *Pis'ma*, 590-592.

<sup>106</sup> Letter 1255, *Pis'ma*, 590-592.

<sup>107</sup> Letter 1245, 10 March 1916, *Pis'ma*, 588.

<sup>108</sup> RGAVMF, f. 408, op. 1, d. 1658, l. 114, 117.

<sup>109</sup> RGVIA, f. 2018, op. 1, d. 322, l. 13.